

# 2012 BUDGET

### **Executive Proposed**

Office of the King County Executive
Office of Performance, Strategy
and Budget

September 2011

King County, Washington



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September 26, 2011

The Honorable Larry Gossett Chair, King County Council Room 1200 COURTHOUSE

#### Dear Councilmember Gossett:

I am pleased to transmit my proposed budget for 2012/2013 and accompanying legislation. This budget reflects our success in reforming King County's finances and puts us on a path toward sustainability. The budget is aligned with the King County Strategic Plan and reflects the eight goals we have established to guide "what" we do and "how" we do it. The budget totals \$5.3 billion overall with \$648.1 million for the General Fund.

I am very pleased that this budget sustains all current services in many of our funds, including the General Fund. It includes investments that will help us improve efficiency and customer service in the future. It also has one-time funds for some important initiatives, including support for our human service providers and efforts to ensure that the 737 MAX aircraft is built in King County. Finally, the budget begins the process of rebuilding some of our reserves, including an increase in the projected 2012 year-end General Fund balance from 6 percent to 6.5 percent.

This budget reflects challenging economic times. The economy of our county is recovering, but only slowly, and many of our residents remain out of work. Sales tax revenues are projected to grow, but not at the rates we experienced in the middle of the last decade. The nation's economy is precarious and some fear another recession is looming. To protect against this, the proposed budget sets aside reserves in the General Fund and the Public Transportation (Transit) Fund to guard against a downturn in sales tax revenues.

This budget that preserves services reflects our success in finding efficiencies and reducing the growth rate in county costs. Much of this is due to our partnerships with employees and their labor unions. Working together, we have agreed to more sustainable cost-of-living increases. Even more remarkably, we have significantly reduced the growth in health care costs by helping our employees become healthier and by creating economic incentives to use health services more wisely.

The Honorable Larry Gossett September 26, 2011 Page 2

Not all of the county's funds are in good financial condition. Transit services are maintained in this budget because of the County Council's action to approve the congestion reduction charge authorized by the Legislature. However, this is only a two-year reprieve, and we need to continue to work with state officials to find a permanent funding source for transit.

Funding for our Roads Services Division is no longer adequate to maintain roads as we have in the past. The combination of annexations, declining property values in the unincorporated areas, lower gasoline tax revenues, and higher materials costs have led to significant reductions in staffing and programs in Roads. We will now have to prioritize services for our roads, focusing on preserving high quality main roads and allowing less-used roads to deteriorate.

The proposed budgets for the departments of Public Health and Community and Human Services reflect the reductions in funding from state and federal sources that occurred earlier this year. However, further cuts are looming because of the state's recently announced \$1.4 billion budget gap. It appears that the Legislature will not meet until late this year to revise the budget, so we cannot anticipate how these critical human and public health services will be affected. We know that the county no longer has the financial capacity to offset state funding cuts.

While this budget reflects our success in finding efficiencies and maintaining services, we cannot stop there. This is an effort that must occur every year and in every agency. I look forward to working with the County Council and our separately-elected officials in these efforts.

If you have any questions, please contact Dwight Dively, Director, Office of Management and Budget at 263-9727.

Sincerely,

Dow Constantine

King County Executive

cc: King County Councilmembers

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ATTN: Council Chief of Staff

Anne Noris, Clerk of the Council

Separately Elected Officials

**Department Directors** 

Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget